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October 23, 2008

The Honorable Kevin Martin
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I believe the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) could soon inflict serious damage on telephone and Internet service in rural areas across the country, and I urge you to slow down and proceed with caution.

This plan has not been seen by anyone outside the FCC itself, and it is scheduled for a vote at the Commission on Election Day, while the rest of the country is focused on other matters.

This plan would cripple telephone and Internet service all across rural America, potentially impacting 30 million homes and businesses in dozens of states. You have stated this would erase \$500 million in revenues for mid-sized rural companies, that provide voice and broadband service.

A sudden revenue drop of this magnitude would force these companies to take corrective action by slashing spending and sharply raising consumer rates. Just to maintain current service, with no improvements, some analysts estimate that rates would need to rise 10 -20% annually for the next decade. These increases would not include other inflationary impacts on rates. Alternatively, the companies could slash spending, which would mean widespread layoffs and cessation of service in certain rural areas. I emphasize that these measures would not improve broadband deployment – they are the minimum necessary just to sustain current operations. These companies would lose all capacity to expand broadband to underserved areas and improve the speed of Internet service.

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Although the damage would be felt nationwide, the consequences in my state would be particularly severe. More than 530,000 Georgia homes, businesses, and other institutions are served by Windstream Communications, one of the companies targeted by the FCC.

The National Association of Regulatory Commissioners has said, "The FCC is rushing to resolve a \$13 billion problem based on insufficient information, an inadequate record, and an incredibly compressed deliberative period. There is no need to do so." I could not agree more, and I urge that you take the association's advice: Publish this proposal in the Federal Register, so we can have a full, open debate and understand the consequences before we move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Doug Everett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "D".

H. Doug Everett
Commissioner

HDE/bw

cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell